

**Conference of Socialist Economists
CSE South, Capital & Class**

Co-hosted by the Global Economy and Business research Unit,
Business School, University of Hertfordshire

Seminar: Debating the Global Working Class

Friday 17th October

University of Hertfordshire,
de Havilland site, Room N003

14.00-17.30

Marcel van der Linden (University of Amsterdam)

‘The Global Working Class: Decline or Revival’

Jenny Chan (University of Oxford)

‘Dying for an iPhone: Apple, Foxconn, and China's New Working Class’

Everybody is welcome to attend the seminar at 14.00. If you would like to join us for lunch beforehand at 13.00 please register with Jane Hardy (j.a.hardy@herts.ac.uk).

Please see websites for details of travel and location <http://www.herts.ac.uk/contact-us/where-to-find-us/de-havilland-maps-and-directions>

Marcel Marius van der Linden

Abstract

The number of wage-earners worldwide has grown significantly in the last three centuries, and its regional distribution has constantly shifted. The class awareness and collective action accompanying the development of this world working class has and is taking on many different forms in the course of time. The presentation will discuss the new challenges that have arisen. It is argued that the building of a new kind of trade unionism will be a difficult process, interspersed with failed experiments and moments of deep crisis. Pressure from below (through competitive networks, alternative action models, etc.) will be a highly important factor in deciding the outcome of this process.

Biographical note

Marcel is director of research at the [International Institute for Social History](#) and holds a professorship dedicated to the history [social movements](#) at the [University of Amsterdam](#). Marcel is most recognized in his field for his approach of a "global labour history", which he has developed since the 1990s. Global labour history is seen by many scholars of labour studies as a new paradigm that wants to overcome both traditional labour history and the "new labour history" developed in the 1960s by scholars like [Eric Hobsbawm](#) and [E.P. Thompson](#).

Jenny Chan

Drawing on extensive fieldwork at China's leading exporter, the Taiwanese-owned Foxconn Technology Group, the power dynamics of the buyer-driven supply chain are analysed in the context of the national terrains that accentuate global pressures. If suicide is understood as one extreme form of labour protest chosen by some to expose injustice, many more workers are choosing other courses. In globally connected production, Chinese workers are engaging in a crescendo of individual and collective struggles to define their rights and defend their dignity in the face of combined corporate and state power.

Biographical note

Jenny is Departmental Lecturer in Contemporary Chinese Studies at the University of Oxford. Her recent articles have appeared in *Current Sociology*, *Modern China*, *Global Labour Journal*, *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, *New Labor Forum*, *Labor Notes*, *New Internationalist*, *New Technology*, and *Work and Employment*. She is writing her first book provisionally entitled *Dying for an iPhone: Apple, Foxconn, and a New Generation of Chinese Workers* (co-authored with PUN Ngai and Mark SELDEN).

About the CSE South Group:

The Conference of Socialist Economists (CSE) <http://www.cseweb.org.uk/> is an international, democratic membership organisation committed to developing a materialist critique of capitalism, unconstrained by conventional academic divisions between subjects. CSE has organised and supported conferences and seminars and publishes the Sage journal *Capital & Class* <http://cnc.sagepub.com/> three times a year.

The CSE South Group is a network of researchers and activists founded by *Capital & Class* Editorial Board member Phoebe Moore and CSE participants Martin Upchurch and Chris Hesketh. Members hold workshops where people present work and hold discussions on topics that concern the CSE and our journal.

About the Global Economy and Research Unit, Hertfordshire Business School, University of Hertfordshire

The Global Economy and Business Research Unit (GEBRU) focuses on issues that face economies, businesses and communities in the context of globalisation. The group undertakes both empirical and policy work, as well as engaging in the theoretical and methodological debates that underpin them. Members of the group are actively engaged with a range of stakeholders which include businesses, trade unions and NGOs. The approach of the group is interdisciplinary drawing on economics, political economy, geography and international business.

The unit's research themes include the restructuring emerging markets in economies such as Poland, Serbia, Ukraine, Zambia and Bangladesh. GEBRU also focuses on migration and labour market mobility, and in particular the dynamics of European East-West migration and the intervention of stakeholders such as states and trade unions. A number of projects are ongoing in relation to foreign direct investment and outsourcing business services. Projects include new divisions of labour within Europe and the role of China in global value chains. The Editorship of the journal *Competition and Change* lies within GEBRU.